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No. 4

AN EPISTLE OF TENDER COUNSEL AND ADVICE TO

All that have believed the TRUTH, to exhort them to Faithfulneſs thereunto.

I. In taking heed of ſettling in a Formality without the Power.

II. To take heed the Spirit of this world doth not drink up their Spirits.

III. To keep their Word, and let their Yea be always Yea.

IV. Not to truſt too much to Education.

V. To love one another.

Written by one that travails for Zion's Proſperity,

STEPHEN CRISP.

A NEW EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed by JAMES PHILLIPS, in George-Yard, Lombard-Street, 1787.

AN

EPISTLE, &c.

Dearly beloved Friends, Brethren, and Sifters.

THE Salutation of my dear love, in the flowings forth of life in the Lord Jefus Chrift, our only Head, reacheth unto you all, in the fpiritual way of communication, which you are made partakers of in the Holy Spirit, in the reachings forth of this love and life, which we have received from the Father of life.

I am drawn forth to vifit you all with an *Epiftle of Tender Advice and Counfel*; and efpecially you, my dear friends, among whom I have travelled in this and other nations. Oh! the remembrance of the glory and power of God, that hath appeared amongft us in days paft, doth much affect my foul at this time, knowing the Lord is the fame to them that do hold faft the things they have heard and learned from the beginning. And my fpirit is exercifed among you, caring and praying for your ftability and continuance in the truth; that ye may be preferved blamelefs unto the day of his coming, armed with power, and furnifhed with wifdom, and prepared with every good gift of the Spirit, to ftand againft the wiles and fubtle workings of the devil your adverfary, who is upon his watch, which way he may deftroy you, and fpoil you of the lot of your inheritance, prepared for you in Chrift Jefus our Lord: and for this purpofe doth he fet all his fubtlety at work, and doth inftigate many whom he hath already caught in his fnares, and fets them as fnares to catch more of you, that by their example, ye that do yet ftand, might alfo fall from your ftedfaftnefs, and be a prey unto him.

Therefore, my dear friends, gird up the loins of your minds, and put on the whole armour of light, then you will ſee round about you, and which way ſoever the enemy comes to aſſault you, you will be prepared to reſiſt him. For your ſufficiency is in the light, and in the truth, which the devil is out of; and if your eye be kept ſingle to truth in your inward parts, it is not all the deceit of the devil, and all his inſtruments, can beguile you, but a certain ſenſe will be given you of his myſterious workings.

And, my dear friends, I would not have you forget that there are many ways to weaken and to darken you, which muſt all be watched againſt; therefore walk circumſpectly, keeping your eye in your head, waiting to feel your ſtrength renewed daily. For be aſſured, your trials and temptations will be renewed, and if you be deſtitute of the heavenly daily bread, there will be a daily weakening, which will appear by your being overcome by ſuch things as once you had a power to ſtand againſt, which is a great grief to behold in many.

And now I have to warn you of a few things that have for ſome time lain upon me to ſend among you, which I do in faithfulneſs recommend to the pure witneſs of God in all conſciences; not as if I judged any: but this I muſt tell you, there is one that judgeth, and will give an anſwer in every one that liſtens to him, by which he may know how far any of theſe things have prevailed upon him. And he that judgeth, will alſo by judgment deliver them that are caught in ſatan's ſnares, if they do hearken and ſubmit to his leadings.

Firſt. Take heed, my dear friends, of holding the truth in a bare formality, ſatisfying yourſelves that you have for a long time owned the way of truth, and under this conſideration ſit down at eaſe, as to the inward man, unacquainted with the inward travails, either for yourſelves or others; unconcerned whether the noble plant grows, either in yourſelves or in others. Oh! my friends, this is a dangerous ſtate, more dangerous than my tongue or pen can declare: therefore conſider how thy poor ſoul is beguiled in this condition; for, in the firſt place, thou art deprived of that daily enjoyment which

which others do enjoy in waiting upon the Lord; they feel his refreſhing preſence, which either fills them with joy and comfort, or elſe opens their underſtandings in the light of a certain knowledge of, and teſtimony againſt, ſuch things as yet ſtand in the way, and hinder the joy of his ſalvation from them. But thou that ſitteſt in a dry formality, without an inward travail upon thy ſpirit, thou knoweſt neither of theſe things, but goeſt on in the dark, not knowing whither thou goeſt, and ſo in the length of time, thou being ſuch a ſtranger to the work of truth in thyſelf, it grows to a queſtion with thee, whether others do witneſs any ſuch powerful workings, yea or nay; for every thing that is not experimental, is liable to queſtion. As he that never ſaw, knows not what ſeeing is; and he that never ſmelt any thing, knows not what ſmelling is; ſo he that through long continuance in this formal manner of going to meetings, continues ſtill unacquainted with the power, will at laſt be eaſily made to queſtion whether there be ſuch a power or no; and in this ſtate the dark power will work inſenſibly, and prevail upon thy ſpirit, and fit thee for his own purpoſe, and will miniſter a ſecret liberty into thy mind, even as to the form itſelf by degrees, and ſo will make thee unfit to ſtand in ſome ſharp trial that will come to try thee, either in having ſomething, or parting with ſomething, which may be had, or parted with, if thou wilt turn thy back on truth. And when this time of trial comes upon thee, then the ſtrength and advantage that the enemy hath gotten upon thee in the time of thy lukewarm, looſe profeſſion, is made manifeſt; then thou art in great ſtraits for a ſeaſon. If the temptation be in having a wife, or huſband, or a portion, or legacy, or gaining a ſuit at law, or recovering a debt, or ſuch like things: and the things cannot be had without letting the teſtimony of thy profeſſion fall, by ſwearing, or going to a prieſt, or ſome other matter contrary to thy profeſſion; oh! what ſtruggling is there in thy ſoul to obtain the thing thou deſireſt, and yet wouldeſt fain be reckoned a friend ſtill, and art loth to be publickly numbered among backſliders and apoſtates. And ſo if the temptation and trial comes on the other ſide, in parting with any thing, which thou loveſt, for thy profeſſion ſake, as thy wife and children, thy liberty, thy money, thy cattle, thy houſe and land, or what elſe may be dear to thee; oh! how doth ſelf work to

 ſave

ſave itſelf, and loth it is to part with the name and reputation of a friend of truth, and as loth to part with any of theſe things for the truth's ſake, not feeling the hundred fold in this time, which Chriſt ſpoke of, nor the life everlaſting neither.

Here is a day of great difficulty and diſtreſs, which is come, and is coming upon many of ſuch careleſs profeſſors, in which they ſtand in need of the help of the divine power of God to ſupport them, and to give them victory. But, alas! they are eſtranged from it. And now the form will not ſupport in the hour of this great trial, but the conſultings of fleſh and blood are grown ſtrong for want of living in the daily croſs; and that nature cries aloud in the ears of thy ſoul, which thou haſt indulged and ſuffered to live; and if thou conſidereſt the truth, and weigheſt the teſtimony of that againſt thy own will and deſire, then thou eaſily ſeeſt which is of moſt weight with thee; for a falſe weight, and falſe balance, and falſe judgment, is got up in the time of thy careleſs profeſſion: and then the old deceiver comes in, and tells thee, thou ſeeſt no evil in it, or at leaſt, not ſo much as on the contrary ſide; ſo that of two evils, it is wiſdom to chuſe the leaſt; and ſuch like reaſonings fill thy mind, till at laſt thy will being ſtrong, and thy underſtanding darkened, thou takeſt up a reſolution to hazard thy ſoul, and to part with thy dry withered teſtimony, which thou haſt for a long time borne without life, and embrace the price that is bidden for it, as Eſau and Judas did, and ſo ſelleſt the truth which thou once followedſt, and delivereſt it (as much as in thee lieth) into the hand of its enemy, to be reproached and trampled upon. And this is the fruit and effect of a long careleſſneſs and remiſſneſs, which thou thoughteſt once would never come to this: and when the ſervants of the Lord have declared what ſad effects ſuch negligence would produce in time, thou haſt been apt to bleſs thyſelf, and to reckon thou wouldeſt never run ſo far out, as publickly to bring reproach upon the way thou profeſſedſt. But, alas! thou little kneweſt that thy ſoul's enemy was all that while but preparing thee againſt the day of thy greateſt trial, and as it were diſarming thee againſt the day of battle, that he might the more eaſily overcome thee: but now thou ſeeſt thou art fallen, when others, being tried

tried with the ſame temptations, ſtand and abide in their teſtimony; and ſo mighteſt thou alſo, if thou hadſt waited upon God in diligence for the renewing of thy ſtrength. Alas! miſerable man or woman, what wilt thou do? thy cloak is now pulled off, thy fig-leaf profeſſion is rent, and thou haſt but two ways, to wit, to turn thy mind from the object of thy delight, to the truth, which thou haſt ſold for it, and by repentance, and through judgment, to wait to ſee if God will be merciful to thee, and to give up now at laſt to that work thou ſo much before ſlightedſt; or elſe to take the other way, and that is, to go on in thy rebellion againſt the light of Chriſt Jeſus, and add ſin to ſin, until the cuſtom of ſin may take away the ſenſe of judgment, and ſo thou mayſt grow to a fleſhly eaſe, and give over caring for thy future well-being, and, like the beaſt that periſheth, ſet thy heart upon the things of this life for a little ſeaſon, and then cometh the end; and thou who waſt once called of God to an inheritance in his light, muſt now have thy portion in the utter darkneſs; and thou that waſt once called to have been a veſſel of honour, art now become a veſſel of wrath fitted for deſtruction. Oh! my ſoul laments the condition of ſuch, and I ſhould rejoice if any of theſe careleſs profeſſors of truth might be awakened before it is too late. But, however, I am thus far clear of their blood, and if they periſh, the fault will be their own.

A ſecond thing that lies upon me to warn you of, my dear friends, is to watch againſt the ſpirit of this world, leaſt it drink up your ſpirits too much in an eager purſuit after the things of this world, which happens to ſome, to their great hurt and damage; and the ſnare lies deep and hidden, under a ſubtle covering. For whereas it is the duty of every man to take care for his family, and to be diligent in the calling God hath ſet him in, and to improve ſuch opportunities as God pleaſeth to put into his hands; here the ſubtle enemy works to make the care immoderate, to turn the diligence into ſlavery, and the improving opportunities which God gives him, to a finding and ſearching out of opportunities, ſometimes by indirect courſes, and ſometimes to the prejudice of his neighbour; and all to try to ſatisfy a greedy deſire after the heaping up of treaſure in this world, and through the earneſtneſs of the affection that kindles

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daily more and more, till a man comes in time to have the increaſe or decreaſe of theſe things to be the objects of his joy or ſorrow; and then he is miſerable: for joy or ſorrow are the higheſt faculties of the mind, and ought to be fixed on the higheſt objects, and not upon tranſitory things under the ſun. But alas! how are many caſt down at loſſes, and lifted up at profits and gains. Oh! my friends, take heed of this fickle, uncertain ſtate; for while ſome have too much ſet their minds upon the things of this world, they have erred from the faith; and placing their truſt in uncertain riches, when theſe have taken their wings and fled away, their hope hath gone with them. Therefore I beſeech you, dear friends, have a care of ſuffering your ſpirits to be ſharpened and ſet on edge about theſe outward things; and take heed of enlarging your trades and trafficks beyond your ability, and beyond your capacity: for both theſe evils have been the ruin of ſome. For every one that hath ability, hath not capacity for great things; and every one that hath capacity, hath not ability; and where either of theſe are wanting, ſuch ought to be content with ſuch low and mean things as they are capable to manage, and able to reach, and not to bear themſelves too much upon the one, and then ſeek, by indirect means, to make the other anſwerable; for no man knows the iſſue beforehand: and therefore, even in theſe things, every one ought to wait to know the guidance of the Lord, and to be ſubject unto his will, though in a croſs to their own. As the apoſtle ſaid of them that ſpoke in this manner, * *We will go into ſuch a city, and continue there a year, aud buy and ſell, and get gain*; (which were lawful things in themſelves;) yet ſaith he, *For that ye ought to ſay, If the Lord will:* ſo he that ſaith, I will increaſe my trade, and inlarge my adventures, that my gain may thereby be inlarged; even in this he ought to ſay, *If the Lord will.*

Oh! friends, wait to feel the governing hand of God in theſe things, to govern you in your affairs, that ſo he may be acknowledged by you the Lord of earth, as well as heaven; the Ruler of your trading and dealings, as well as of your religion and profeſſion.

* James iv. 13.

And,

And, friends, I deſire you to remember that the crown of our profeſſion was, that our *Yea was Yea*, and our *Nay was Nay:* and ſo it is ſtill with all the faithful followers of the truth; though too many have let in a falſe liberty, ſince their firſt convincement, and have not that reſpect to their words as they ought to have; to the great diſhonour of God, and grief of the righteous, and wounding of their own ſouls. Oh! my friends, let this be amended by every one that hath been overtaken in it, as you tender the honour of God, your own proſperity, and the good of others: for many ſtumblings have hereby been laid in the way of ſome who have been near to truth, and they have fallen, and been loſt; but they that laid the ſtumblings, will not be found clear of their blood in the day of the Lord's inquiſition.

Therefore let all take heed for time to come, to be true to their word; for all who profeſs the truth, do in a kind pledge the truth as much as in them lies, or at leaſt their part in the truth, every time they paſs their promiſe, or ſign a bill or obligation for any payment to be made at a certain time mentioned in the ſaid promiſe, bill, or obligation. And ſuch a one hath now no power to diſpenſe with the payment at the time appointed, without the conſent of the party to whom he is ſo engaged; and if he doth of himſelf delay, or deny payment, he forfeits what he pledged, namely his truth. Now which of you, having pledged your coat or cloak for half the value, upon condition it ſhall be redeemed on a certain day, or to loſe it, would not be careful to obſerve the day? But Oh! of how much greater value is this pledge, when truth lies at ſtake? I am ſure they that love it, will have more care of it than of a coat, or any earthly thing.

Therefore the ways to prevent all ſuch miſcarriages, are to be taken notice of; and in the firſt place, that none run themſelves into neceſſities by indirect courſes, as by an over-charging themſelves in trading; nor in over-buying more than they are able to compaſs; nor by ſuretyſhip, which makes a ſuppoſed debt, though uncertain, and therefore the more dangerous, becauſe it may ome upon you at unawares,

unawares, before you are prepared for it. These things ought, in wisdom, to be prevented before-hand.

Also every one that upon a just occasion doth borrow, and doth pass his word upon the reputation of truth, by promise, bill, or obligation, ought at the same time to have something in his eye of most certainty, by which he shall be enabled to perform his word; and not to trust to returns of adventures, increase of crops, gains of trade, or others keeping their word with him, or any such like uncertainties; for if any do so, they may be in this snare of being unfaithful to their promise before they are aware. But although there is a kind of uncertainty in all these things below, yet where a man's truth and profession are thus depending, and must be discharged or forfeited, there ought, as I said before, to be something most certain in such an one's eye, by which he may save his word; as money that he knows to be ready for his use, or goods in possession, or lands that are free, and can be engaged if the worst come: for you will find more peace in conscience, and a better answering of truth, to make a new engagement of land or goods, than to break an old engagement of your truth and profession.

Dear friends, my heart is full in this matter, and much I could write hereof, but I spare you in love. Be wise in all these things, that so ye may not be in bondage and slavery to the things of this life, but may have a dominion and reign over them, according to your calling in Christ Jesus; that none may have cause justly against any of you, to say, Such an one's Yea is Nay; for then he takes your crown and your pledge, which is hard to gain again.

The next thing that lies upon me, is in respect to such as have been brought up and educated among us, and are grown up, and do make profession of the same way and truth in which they have been educated: that all such may take heed that they rest not in a bare form of the truth, without having regard to their inward travail of soul, and to their growth in the power of godliness. For the snares of their souls enemy lie deep in this matter, and his working is to draw their minds into

into the world, whilst their bodies, and their publick profession, remain among friends; and to keep them at ease and liberty from the daily cross, and from the crucifying power, by which they should travail to subdue that nature in themselves which is grown up in their youth, as well under this profession as under any other, where the power is not minded diligently: and by this means many are and remain unfitted for the *testimony of truth*, wanting to be rooted and grounded in it, through an experimental warfare in their own particulars. For, my friends, I say unto you in the words of the Lord, *Except ye be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God:* and if ye cannot see that, what availeth it what you see? for all sight, vision, and opening of things, will not save nor deliver your souls in the day of trial that will come upon you for the trial of your faith; and then if your faith be such a one as stands in words and terms, though never so true, yet it will fail you in that day, and you will not be able to stand.

Therefore, dear friends, sink down in lowliness and humility, and wait to feel the power revealed in you, and join your minds to it in a living faith, that you may come to experience every vain thought and exalted desire, and every idle word, and evil action, to be judged by the pure judgment of truth, and a subduing of that nature that lusteth unto disobedience of the righteous law of God in your hearts: and as that nature is kept under the daily cross, it will weaken and die daily in you, and the weaker it is made, the more you will feel of the powerful quickenings of the word of God in your souls, and a tender life will spring up in you, to your great comfort, that will be tender of the glory of God, and of the honour and reputation of your profession. And as you join herewith, you will be acquainted with the travails of the true Zion, the mother of us all, who brings not forth but through deep exercises; and although this will take you off from the delights and pleasures, and loftiness of this world, yet the end will repay all your sorrow; for this will bring you to know the worth of truth, and teach you to set a value upon it, and upon every testimony of it, beyond all transitory and fading things; whereas others,

others, who have lightly come by their profeſſion, will lightly eſteem it, and lightly let it go again. Therefore my concern is, that you might be wiſe unto ſalvation, and for that end do I ſend this to you, that ye might be brought to try your foundations, every one in yourſelves, before it be tried for you; for then it will be too late to come to the true foundation, or at leaſt it will be through greater hardſhip. When the cry at midnight is heard, and the time of entrance cometh, it will be too late to buy oil to your lamps; and then ſuch who have a lamp, and no oil, will be ſhut out. Therefore prize your time, and examine what reaſon you have in yourſelves to make profeſſion of the name and way of God, more than that you were educated therein, and brought up to it by your parents, guardians, or maſters. Have you ever felt the heavenly virtue of it overſhadowing your ſouls? And if you have, do you retain and keep the favour of it ſtill upon your ſpirits? Do you feel yourſelves poſſeſſed with that awe, fear, and reverence of the Lord's preſence, which the Lord's people felt in the beginning of their day, and the faithful do ſtill feel? Is the inward enjoyment of the life of truth a greater joy to you than all your outward enjoyments? If ſo, then you will not ſell it, nor part with it, for any thing in this world: and the teſtimonies, which ſuch do bear for the truth, will not be traditional, but from a ſenſible convincement in themſelves; ſo that they will be able to ſay, "Theſe things have we received "from the Lord, and they are the teſtimonies of God ma-"nifeſt to us in the light of his Son Chriſt Jeſus, in "whom we have believed."

Oh! friends, how will this drive back the ſtorm of temptations that will come, both inwardly and outwardly, in a time of trouble? How many are there, who for want of this aſſurance in themſelves, have been brought to great queſtionings and doubtings, and knew not whether to go backward or forward? and many have halted and ſtaggered, and ſome have fallen, and roſe no more, to the ruin of themſelves and others. Therefore, my dear friends, truſt not to the reſolutions of your own ſpirits, without a ſenſe of the power, nor to a receiving the truth by your education, but all wait to be made living and true witneſſes of the riſing

riſing of the power in your own hearts, and of the carrying on of the work of the power in yourſelves; to the regenerating you, and bringing you to that birth that truſteth in nothing, but in the Lord alone, and hath him for its ſupport in the greateſt exerciſes. Then ſhall ye ſtand and remain, and be a generation choſen of God, to bear his name and teſtimony, and to commit it to the next generation.

And, friends, let the brotherly-love that was ſown in your hearts, as a precious ſeed in your firſt convincement, continue and increaſe daily; that as ye are made partakers of one hope of ſalvation in Chriſt Jeſus, ſo ye may continue of one mind and heart, according to the working of his ſpirit in you, having a tender reſpect one for another, as children of one father, and as ſuch who feed at one table. For Chriſt hath ordained, and doth ordain in all his churches, that we ſhould love one another; that we ſhould ſhun all occaſions of offences and grief; walking orderly, as becomes his holy goſpel, that we may be an honour thereunto, and a ſtrength and comfort to one another. This is our great ordinance, our new commandment, which was alſo from the beginning, and will always abide the ſame through all generations. Therefore, my friends and brethren, let the fruits of ſincere and brotherly-love abound amongſt you both in word and deed, and let none be wanting in fulfilling the *law of Charity*, without which all profeſſion will be but like ſounding braſs, or a tinkling cymbal.

But if this life be kept to, the life of religion will be felt, and each one will be taught his duty and charge concerning another, and know how to give comfort in charity, to admoniſh in charity: to reprove in charity, and alſo to receive theſe in charity; and this will exclude for ever all whiſpering, and tale-bearing, and bring to dealing plainly and uprightly with every one, not ſuffering ſin to reſt upon the ſoul of thy brother, but to deal with him quickly, and with plainneſs, yet tenderly, even as thou thyſelf wouldſt be dealt withal. And however this kind of dealing be taken, thou ſhalt not miſs of thy reward, but thy peace will remain with thee: for while friends are looking to the power of God, as their guide

guide and leader in all these things, and their design is simply God's glory, the clearing their own consciences, and the good of their brother, they will not be discouraged in their undertakings; for they know the power will certainly come over whatsoever opposeth it: and this will keep your minds quiet and free from disturbances, when you see men, and parties, rise against the power, knowing that the power is an everlasting rock. But as for those things that appear against it, they are but for a season, in which season patience must be exercised, and the counsel of wisdom stood in, and then you will be kept from staggering, or from scattering, by all the fair shews the spirit of opposition may make.

For they that enjoy the life and substance, and feed daily of the bread which comes down from heaven, have a quick sense and discerning of things that are presented to them, and do know them that are of the earth, by their earthly savour, from those that are of the heavenly, with their heavenly savour. They know what feeds the head, and the wit and carnal reason, and what will nourish the immortal soul; and so come to be fixed, and are not ready to feed upon unsavoury food, nor to be easily tossed, nor to be troubled at evil tidings, nor cannot be drawn after one thing or man by an affection, nor set against another man nor thing by a prejudice: but the true balance of a a sound judgment, settled in the divine knowledge, according to the measure that the Father has bestowed, keeps such steady in their way, both in respect to their own testimony and conversation, and also in respect to their dealing with others.

Oh! my dear friends, in such doth the truth shine, and such are the true followers of Christ, and they are worthy to be followed, because their way is as a shining light, shining on towards the perfect day. And in this sure and steady way, my soul's desire is, that you and I may walk, and continue walking unto the end of our days, in all *sobriety*, *truth*, *justice*, *righteousness*, and *charity*, as good examples in our day, and comfortable precedents in our end, to them that shall remain. That so we may deliver over all the testimonies of our Lord Jesus unto the succeeding generations,

generations, as pure, as certain, and as innocent as we received them in the beginning; and in the end of all our labours, travails, trials, and exercises, may lay down our heads in that sabbath of rest that remains always for the Lord's people.

This is the breathing desire that lives in me, for you who have believed in our Lord Jesus Christ; in whose name, and in a sense of his power, and of the life he hath revealed in every member of his whole body, I salute you all, and bid you farewell.

STEPHEN CRISP.

1680.